

**BRIDES, REALLY FAKE VIRGINS,
CASTER, 'KHWEZI', THE BLADE
RUNNER AND 100% ZULU BOY:**

**READING THE SEXUALITY OF
POST/APARTHEID CULTURAL
POLITICS**

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**A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF
HUMANITIES, UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND,
JOHANNESBURG, IN FULFILMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF
PHILOSOPHY**

17 MARCH, 2014

ABSTRACT

This thesis throws into relief the nomadic meshings of sexualities with post/apartheid cultural politics. It explores how, why and with what effects sexualities and post/apartheid nationhood have been imbricated in signal events and phenomena. Terms used to construct the thesis' title each allude to significant events and processes through which assemblages of nationhood, sexualities, gender and race are worked on/with in particular ways. I propose that these events form a prism through which we are able to see refracted how a race-gender-sexuality complex becomes a pivotal mechanism through which post/apartheid subjectivities, embodiments, nationhood and sovereignty are being constructed and contested. I conclude that the events under discussion index how sexuality is both a site of political contestation; and, a central and crucial component of post/apartheid nationhood. That it is a 'machinic assemblage', which conditions and constitutes a particular field of the political including a popular consciousness of the post/apartheid body politic and sovereignty.

Presenting qualitative analysis that reflects on the rhetorical structures evident within the nationscapes under discussion, I analyse and make reference to a substantial sample of media representations of, and discourses about, each of the scenes evaluated across the thesis. To this end, I focalise what Lauren Berlant has termed, the 'National Symbolic'; an imaginary, chimerical and affect-laden screen projection through which citizens venture to 'grasp the nation in its totality'.

This interdisciplinary project both draws on and expands the South African, Feminist and Queer Studies Fields and is influenced by what Judith Butler calls the 'New Gender Politics'. I achieve this by bringing diverse critical perspectives into a discursive exchange with emerging bodies of scholarship concerned with questions of gender, sexualities, dis/ability and race in the South African context. I introduce novel, or previously untapped, theoretical repertoires to pursue unexplored interpretive horizons that generate new discourses about post/apartheid sexuality and politics. In doing so, I analyse a range of topics including: the state's management of contemporary virginity practices and its abstinence messaging; popular anti-polygamy discourse; and, critical intersex and dis/ability politics, which the available scholarship has not addressed.

Although President Jacob Zuma is not the subject of this inquiry, each chapter examines events and developments that are both explicitly, and more implicitly, associated with his presidency. These events have unfolded during a later period of the post/apartheid dispensation; sometimes called the post post/apartheid period. I have written about a time that marked a conservative twist in the transition, which is not imagined as a teleological process. This is a perplexing time of uneven shifts where old things seem to be hardening even as they are simultaneously thinning or leaking away while new things are emerging in unpredictable rhythms and forms.

DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is my own unaided work. It is submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination in any other university.

Benita de Robillard

17 March, 2014

For Myra (1951-2002)
and Pierre

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The time during which this thesis was conceptualised and written coincided with periods of mourning. One of the losses was Colin Richards, my initial supervisor. Thanks are due to him for treating me like a colleague, for the intellectual kinship we shared and for so fiercely protecting the space that was needed for improvisation. I am also immensely grateful to Cynthia Kros for agreeing to take over supervision when the project was already at an advanced stage of its development; and, for her sharp insights, steadfast support and tremendous patience.

When I first started thinking about the proposal conversations with Nicole Ridgway were very generative. Ruth Lipschitz has been an unfailingly generous, encouraging, funny and inspiring presence; even from afar. Thanks are due to David Bunn, Gerrit Olivier and Georges Pfruender who, in their capacities as successive heads of the Wits School of Arts, supported applications that funded this work. Georges went out of his way to assist the project; I remain very grateful. I also acknowledge Warren Nebe's support for a SKYE funding application when he was the head of the Division of Dramatic Art as well as the colleagues with whom I work. Diligent and good-humoured research assistance from Arlene Murphy, Andre van Schalkwyk and Catherine Duncan and excellent teaching support from Catherine, Anne Davis and Leyla Tavernaro-Haidarian was invaluable. I am also indebted to Sindra Da Corte for her intrepid, meticulous and committed research assistance for the last years of the

project's duration; and, for boiling copious kettles of water and taking such good care of my cats, Sam and Frankie. Ann Nortje's typing skills and ministrations at an important time saved much and Tracey McCormick provided very good advice at a pivotal moment. I also thank Amanda Du Preez, Rory Du Plessis and Tommaso Milani for generous invitations that have made this research visible to different audiences.

How to thank the kindest and most razor-witted of friends who helped and supported me in so many ways? Ann Nortje, Fiona Park, Julia Blain, Elisabeth Nortje, Karen Nortje, Fred Hagemann, Ruth Lipschitz, Nicola Rust and the late Jackie Cleobury – thank you. Quintin Hawthorne's help, pragmatism and generosity were indispensable. I will never be able to adequately thank my parents, Myra and Pierre De Robillard, who have made possible my life and the choices I have been able to make.

The writing of this thesis was supported by: a National Research Foundation Thuthuka Grant; two Faculty of Humanities Research Grants; a Carnegie Transformation Grant; a Ferguson Centre for African and Asian Studies Conference Attendance Grant; a Faculty of Humanities Publication Promotion Grant; a WISER Doctoral Summer School Fellowship; and an International Association for the Study of Sexuality, Culture and Society Scholarship. I am most grateful for the opportunities and support these awards provided. The views rendered in the thesis do not reflect on these bodies.

**CHAPTERS IN PREVIOUS FORM HAVE BEEN
PUBLISHED AND/OR PRESENTED AS
FOLLOWS:**

JOURNAL ARTICLES

“Girls’ and ‘virginity’: making the post-apartheid nation state,’ *Agenda*, 79, pp 85-93. 2009.

‘Caster Semenya and Oscar Pistorius: Improper Corporealities Cripqueering the Body Politic,’ (forthcoming 2014).

BOOK CHAPTER

‘Something ‘New’ That’s Been Here All Along? Polygamy and the Afropolitan Bridal Couple in South African Bridal Magazines’ *Taking a Hard Look: Gender and Visual Culture in Post-Apartheid South Africa* Cambridge Scholars Press ISBN: 978-1-44380-982-5. pp 73-101. 2009.

FULL-LENGTH AND PEER REVIEWED CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

‘Here comes the bride: fantasies and technologies of heterosexual selfhood in the contemporary South African bridal magazine,’ *Gender Studies Here and Now* South Africa ISBN: 0-9584986-4. 2006.

“Something ‘new’ that’s been here all along? The Afropolitan bridal couple in the South African bridal magazine,’ *Gender and Visual Culture* conference proceedings’. The Institute for Women’s and Gender Studies, University of Pretoria, 2007 ISBN: 978-1-44380-982-5. 2009.

‘Polygamy and Politics in Post-Apartheid South Africa,’ in *5th Global Persons and Sexuality Conference: Probing the Boundaries*. Interdisciplinary.net. pp 167-179. 2009.

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

'Caster Semenya and Oscar Pistorius: Improper Corporealities Cripqueering the Body Politic,' *Body Knowledge* hosted by WISER, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg (2-4 September, 2013).

“Our Caster”: (Dis)embodied (un)belonging in the Post-Apartheid Nation-State,' presented at the *VIII IASSCS. International Association for the Study of Sexuality, Culture and Society: Naming and Framing of Sexual (In)Equality* conference held at the Universidad Complutense de Madrid, Spain (6-9 July, 2011).

'Polygamy and Politics in Post-Apartheid South Africa,' presented at the *5th Global Persons and Sexuality Conference: Probing the Boundaries*. Conference hosted by Interdisciplinary.Net Salzburg, Austria (November, 2008).

'Something 'new' that's been here all along? The Afropolitan bridal couple in the South African bridal magazine' presented at the *Gender and Visual Culture* conference hosted by The Institute for Women's and Gender Studies, University of Pretoria (June, 2007).

'Here comes the bride: fantasies and technologies of heterosexual selfhood in the contemporary South African bridal magazine,' presented in the Opening Plenary session at the *Gender Studies Here and Now* conference hosted by FOTIM in Pretoria (January, 2006).

'Thoughts on the politics of authentication and authorisation staged within South African media coverage of the Jacob Zuma rape trial,' presented at Doctoral Summer School conference on *Identity Formation in the Black Atlantic. The Politics of Authenticity, Authorisation and Truth* hosted by the University Federal de Bahia, Salvador de Bahia, Brazil (October, 2006).

'Brides, Really Fake Virgins and 100% Zulu Boy: thoughts on the heterosexual politics of the post apartheid setting,' presented at *The Borderpolitics of Whiteness Conference* hosted by the Department of Critical and Cultural studies at MacQuarie University, Sydney (December, 2006).

'Here comes the bride: fantasies and technologies of heterosexual selfhood in the contemporary South African bridal magazine,' delivered at the *Self and Subject: African and Asian Perspectives* conference hosted by the Ferguson Centre for African and Asian Studies (Open University, Edinburgh (September, 2005).

CONTENTS

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS	x
INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER ONE – ‘POST/APARTHEID POLYGAMY POLITICS’	24
INTRODUCTION	24
TWO SEX SCANDALS AND TWO PRESIDENTS	29
‘WHITE’ AFRICANS AND A ‘NEW’ NATIVISM	45
THE AFROPOLITAN BRIDAL COUPLE	51
REPHALLICISATION; OR, UNDOING THE ‘SEXUAL DIALECTIC OF RACISM’	64
MEN AND POLYGAMY	71
WOMEN AND POLYGAMY	78
CHAPTER TWO – “GIRLS’ AND VIRGINITY: MAKING THE POST/APARTHEID NATION STATE’	89
‘GIRL-AS-VIRGIN’ AS POLITICAL RESOURCE	94
‘GIRL’ BODIES AND SEXUALITIES AND THE POST/APARTHEID NATION	96
REGIMES REGULATING TEEN SEXUALITY	101
CHAPTER THREE – “‘KHWEZI’ AND 100% ZULU BOY: POST/APARTHEID CULTURAL NATIONALISM AND HETERONORMATIVITY’	105
A RAPE TRIAL: THE STATE VERSUS JACOB GEDLEYIHLEKISA ZUMA	105
100% ZULU BOY: TECHNOLOGISING THE SELF	118
‘KHWEZI’ AND ‘THE BLACK LESBIAN’: FICTITIOUS; OR, PROTOTYPICAL POST/APARTHEID CITIZEN?	133
CHAPTER FOUR – ‘OUR CASTER’ AND ‘THE BLADE RUNNER’: DIS/INTEGRATING/ED BODIES ENFLESHING POST/APARTHEID SOVEREIGNTY	148
INTRODUCTION	149
TWO SILVER MEDALS	154
DIS/ASSEMBLING SEMENYA	168

EPISTEMIC FEVER	184
ASSEMBLAGES, SOMATECHNICS & CORPOREALITIES	188
INTERSEX ETHICS AND POLITICS: SEMENYA'S BODILY DIS/INTEGRITY	198
BODY-SPORT-NATION COMPLEX	206
SEMENYA AND PISTORIUS ASSEMBLING THE POST/APARTHEID BODY POLITIC	216
POST/APARTHEID SOVEREIGNTY POLITICS	260
'FLAGGING': MAKING THE BODY/NATION ASSEMBLAGE	274
TWO IMPROPER BODIES CRIPQUEERING POST/APARTHEID SOVEREIGNTY	311
CONCLUSION	327
REFERENCES	341

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

INTRODUCTION

Fig. A. *NewsNow*, (31 May 2012). Front Cover.

Fig. B. *NewsNow*, 'SA Sees Red Over Zuma Painting' (31 May 2012). Article, p.6.

Fig. C. *Idees Vol Vrees* Facebook page photo of 'Shlong Walk To Freedom', May 24, 2012.

Fig. D. 'Fight Crime – Vote VF' (26 April 2009). Vryheids Front (Freedom Front) election poster outside a Voting Station on Rabie Street, Johannesburg. Photo source: Benita de Robillard.

Fig. E. SEXPO (2 October 2010). Photo source: Benita de Robillard.

Fig. F. *Time*, 'Black And White World', (25 April 2005). Cover.

Fig. G. *NewsNow*, 'I'm Not Racist But...', (1 March 2012). Cover.

Fig. H. *NewsNow*, 'South Africa', (1 March 2012). Page 5.

Fig. I. *NewsNow*, 'We Are All Like That', (1 March 2012). Article, p. 10-11.

Fig. J. *NewsNow*, 'We Are All Like That', (1 March 2012). Article, p. 12-13.

Fig. K. *The Citizen*, "It's The Whites!", (11 July 2009). Front page.

Fig. L. *Rolling Stone*, 'Destroying Dreams In The Rainbow Nation', (December 2011). Article, p.31.

Fig. M. *The Star*, "'67 Minutes Of Shame' As Gays Protest To Demand Rights", (19 July 2012), Article, p.2.

CHAPTER ONE

Fig. 1.1. *You*, (3 June 2010). Cover.

Fig. 1.2. *Sunday Times*, (22 April 2012). Front page picture.

Fig. 1.3. *City Press*, (22 April 2012). Front page insert.

Fig. 1.4. *City Press*, 'Smitten Zuma Takes Wife No 4' (22 April 2012). News article, p.3.

Fig. 1.5. *City Press*, 'Zuma's First Wives Club' (22 April 2012). Infographic, p.3.

Fig. 1.6. *Sunday Times*, 'Zuma To Marry Again!' (15 April 2012). News article, front page.

Fig. 1.7. *True Love*, 'All The President's Women' (August 2010). Article, p. 142-146.

Fig. 1.8. *City Press*, 'How Can You Desire A Friend's Child?' (7 February 2010). Letters page, p.16.

Fig. 1.9. *Mail and Guardian*, (5-11 February 2010). Cartoon.

Fig. 1.10. *The Times*, (2 February 2010). Cartoon, p.12.

Fig. 1.11. *Sunday Times*, (22 April 2012). Kulula.com advertisement, p.3.

Fig. 1.12. *City Press*, (16 August 2009).

Fig. 1.13. *The Citizen*, (2 February 2010). Cartoon, p.12.

Fig. 1.14. *City Press*, 'Zuma Sorry After Nation Says: Zip It!' (7 February 2010). News article, front page.

Fig. 1.15. *City Press*, (7 March 2010). Cartoon, p.3.

Fig. 1.16. *Style* (October 2005). Editorial, p.36.

Fig 1.17. *Fair Lady*, (October 2005). Article, p.110-111.

Fig 1.18. Earthcote advertisement.

Fig 1.19. *True Love Bride*, (Winter 2007).

Fig. 1.20. *True Love Bride*, 'Ethnic Vibe' (2004). Article, p.108-109.

Fig. 1.21 *True Love Bride*, (2004).

Fig. 1.22. *True Love Bride*, (2004). Cover, p.29.

Fig. 1.23. *True Love Bride*, (2004). Article p.112-113.

Fig. 1.24. *Cosmopolitan*, 'Lobola – Culture C(l)ash' (March 2006). Article, p.90.

Fig. 1.25. *Cosmopolitan Hitched*, 'I Now Pronounce You...Not Married?' (2011).
Article, p.16.

Fig. 1.26. *Bona*, 'Lobola [-] When Cattle Becomes Cash', (February 2009). Article,
p.28-29.

Fig. 1.27. South African Department of Health Khomanani AIDS Awareness
Campaign. Postcard.

Fig. 1.28. *Blink*, 'Monogamy Fallacy Or Reality', (July 2005). Article, p.18.

Fig. 1.29. *True Love*, 'Three's Company', (August 2005). Article.

Fig. 1.30. *Elle*, 'Big Love'. Article, p. 52.

Fig. 1.31. *O Magazine*, 'I Do, I Do, I Do', (February 2011). Article.

Fig. 1.32.a *Real*, (October 2011). Front Cover.

Fig. 1.32.b *Real*, 'The New Face Of Polygamy', (October 2011). Article, p.86.

Fig. 1.33. *Marie Claire*, 'My Father Had Five Wives At Once'. Article, p.14.

Fig. 1.34. *Cosmopolitan*, 'My Story', (May 2012). Article, p.99.

Fig. 1.35. *Elle*, 'Polygamy: An Old Wives' Tale?', (July 2006). Article, p.88.

Fig. 1.36. *Sunday Times Review*, (6 June 2010). Cartoon, p.12.

Fig. 1.37. *Sunday Times*, 'Zuma's Woes Grow As Demands From Wives And Nkandla
Take Toll', (2 February 2014). Article, p.6.

Fig. 1.38. *The Times*, 'Scandal As Zuma's Wives' Bickering Ends In Boycott', (6 January
2010). Article, p.4.

CHAPTER TWO

Fig. 2.1. *Fair Lady*, 'The Politics Of Chastity' (March 2006). Article, p. 54-55.

Fig. 2.2. *Marie Claire*, 'Does Anybody Else Have The Right To Know If You're A Virgin?' (February 2005). Article, p. 55.

Fig. 2.3. *Seventeen*, 'Testing Tested' (January 2006). Article, p.82-83.

Fig. 2.4. *Seventeen*, '17 On The Street' (January 2006). Article, p.85.

Fig. 2.5. *The Times*, 'Don't Mess With Virgin Territory' (26 September 2008).

Newspaper article, p. 6.

CHAPTER THREE

Fig. 3.1. "Rape Trial: 'Zuma Culture' Is Not 'Zulu Culture'".

Fig. 3.2. *Mail and Guardian*, '100% Zuluboy'.

Fig. 3.3. *You*, 'Say Sorry, Julius!' (18 June 2009). Article, p. 142-143.

Fig. 3.4. *The Star*, 'Zuma Has HIV Test As An Example To Others' (9 April 2010).

Newspaper article, p.12.

Fig. 3.5. *Sunday Times*, (7 September 2009). Cartoon.

Fig. 3.6. *The Citizen*, (16 December 2013). Cartoon, p.12.

Fig. 3.7. *Mail and Guardian*, (10-16 June 2011). Cartoon, p.37.

Fig. 3.8. *The Times*, (9 April 2009). Cartoon, p.2.

Fig. 3.9. *The Citizen*, (12 September 2009). Cartoon, p.8.

Fig. 3.10. *Alice*, (January/February 2012). Magazine article, p.67.

Fig. 3.11. *Drum*, 'Morals, Values And Tyrannus' (10 May 2007). Magazine article, p. 94-95.

Fig. 3.12. *Rooi Rose*, 'Die Ware Jacob?' (May 2008). Magazine article, p. 28-29.

Fig. 3.13. *The Times*, (4 February 2008). Newspaper article, front page.

Fig. 3.14. *House and Leisure*, 'An Artist's Eye' (April 2010). Magazine article, p.74.

Fig. 3.15. *Classic Feel*, 'Embracing The Experimental' (April 2010). Magazine article, p. 64.

Fig. 3.16. 'Zuma's Harrowing Week Of Shockers In The Dock'.

Fig. 3.17. *Drum*, 'Raped Again - In Court' (March 2009). Magazine Article.

Fig. 3.18. *City Press*, 'No Justice For Us, Say Gay Women' (16 January 2011).
Newspaper Article, p. 10.

Fig. 3.19. *True Love*, 'Lesbians: No Entry' (February 2011). Magazine article, p. 99.

Fig. 3.20. *Mail and Guardian*, 'Opening Spaces To Challenge Prejudice'.
Newspaper article.

Fig. 3.21. *True Love*, 'Zanele Muholi On The Female Form' (December 2010).
Magazine article, p. 118-119.

Fig. 3.22. *Alice*, 'Walking With Zanele Muholi' (January/February 2012). Magazine
article, p. 64-65.

Fig. 3.23. *Marie Claire*, 'This Woman Was Murdered For Being HIV Positive', p. 54-55.

Fig. 3.24. *Mail and Guardian*, 'Marriage: Anything Less Is NOT Equal' (15-19 July
2004). Advertisement, p. 23.

Fig. 3.25. *You*, 'In Love, Married And Happy' (28 May 2009). Magazine article, p. 152.

Fig. 3.26. *Sunday Times*, (1 October 2006). Cartoon, p.20.

Fig. 3.27. *Sowetan*, 'JZ's Mshini Blasts Gays' (26 September 2006). Front page.

Fig. 3.28. *Move!* (September 2006). Front Cover.

CHAPTER FOUR

Fig. 4.1.a *You*, 'Ruined' (28 February 2013). Front Cover.

Fig. 4.1.b *Vanity Fair*, 'The Shooting Star And The Model', (1 June 2013).

Fig. 4.1.c *City Press*, 'Let the games begin!' (22 July 2012). Sports section feature, p. 24.

Fig. 4.2. *Time*, 'Oscar Pistorius: Full-bodied Challenger' (30 April 2012). Article, p. 104.

Fig. 4.3. *You*, 'Dossier of Disgrace', (3 December 2009). Article, p. 10-11.

Fig. 4.4. *Sunday Times*, (23 August 2009). Cartoon, p.12.

Fig. 4.5. *You*, 'Race for the Truth' (24 September 2009). Article, p.14.

Fig. 4.6. *True Love*, 'Intersexed: Torn Between Two Worlds' (January 2010). Article, p.120. *Drum*, 'At Peace with our bodies' (29 April 2010). Article, p.18.

Fig. 4.7. Scenes from My South Africa: Oscar Pistorius. South African Tourism advertisement 2011.

Fig. 4.8.a *Time*, 'Man-Superman-Gunman' (11 March 2013). Cover.

Fig. 4.8.b *Rapport*, *My Tyd* (11 March 2013). Cover.

Sarie, (February 2013). Cover.

Fig. 4.9. Labuscagne, C. *Sarie*, 'Oscar parfuum se superheld' (June 2011). Article, p. 36-37.

GQ Style South Africa, 'A*Men: Beyond Fragrance' (Spring/Summer 2012/2013).

Thierry Mugler advertisement, p. 31.

Fig. 4.10. *The New York Times Magazine*, 'His Need for Speed', (22 January 2012). Cover.

Fig. 4.11. *Sunday Times*, Press image of Prof. Hugh Herr (29 January 2012), p.8.

Fig. 4.12.a *Sunday Times Culture* (London), 'And the Future is bionic' (10 July 2011). Article, p.4-5.

Fig. 4.12.b *GQ Style South Africa*, (Spring/Summer 2012/2013). Cover, Volume 2.

Fig. 4.13. *Rethink Ability*, Nedbank commercial.

Fig. 4.14.a *Sunday Times*, 'Mighty' (9 September 2012). Pick n Pay advertisement, p.6.

City Press, 'Powerful' (2 September 2012). Pick n Pay advertisement, p.17.

'Be Whoever You Need To Be' (August 2011). Vital bus shelter advertisement, Malibongwe Drive, Randburg. Photo source: Benita de Robillard.

Fig. 4.14.b. SABC Advertisement commemorating 20 years of 'inspiration'.

Fig. 4.15. The Official SASCOC Quarterly, (2012, Issue 7). Cover.

Fig. 4.16. *The Sunday Independent*, 'There she goes...', (11 July 2010). Front page of The Sunday Dispatches, p. 13.

Rapport, 'Caster Se Bittersoet Silwer' (12 August 2012). Front page header.

City Press, 'One Dream, One Team' (29 July 2012). Front page header.

Fig. 4.17.a *Saturday Star*, (12 September 2009). News page layout, p.4.

Fig. 4.17.b *The Sunday Times*, 'Hair's Looking At You, Kid' (25 October 2009). Front page.

Fig. 4.17.c *The Citizen*, 'It's War!' (12 September 2009a). Front page.

Fig. 4.18. *City Press* 'How We See It'. (12 August 2012). Cartoon, p.22.

Fig. 4.19. *Real*, (November 2012). Cover.

Fig. 4.20.a Previous page: *Men's Health*, (August 2012). Cover.

GQ Style South Africa, 'Man of the Future' (Spring/Summer 2012/2013).

Cover Story, p.50-51.

GQ South Africa, 'GQ Best-dressed Men of the Year 2011' (November 2011). Article, p. 111.

Fig.4.20.b *Heat*, 'Oscar Pistorius: SA's Most Eligible Bachelor' (3-9 September 2011).

Article, issue 378, p.4.

Heat, 'Oscar Pistorius: SA's Most Eligible Bachelor' (3-9 September 2011).

Article, issue 378, p.6.

Heat, 'Oscar Pistorius: SA's Most Eligible Bachelor' (3-9 September 2011).

Article, issue 378, p.8.

Grazia, '10 Hot stories – Oscar Victorious' (13 June 2012). Article, p. 14.

Grazia, '10 Hot stories – Oscar Victorious' (13 June 2012). Article, p. 16.

Grazia, 'Chart of Lust' (13 June 2012). n.p.